



Census Shows Growth in Value of Wisconsin Ag Products

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MADISON – The 2012 Census of Agriculture Preliminary Data was released, and Wisconsin remains ninth in the nation among states for the value of agricultural production. The state sold \$11.7 billion of agricultural products in 2012, a 30% increase from \$9.0 billion in 2007. This includes Wisconsin sales of crops, livestock, poultry and their products, including dairy and government payments to farmers.

“Thank you to Wisconsin farmers for completing and returning their questionnaires in a timely manner,” said Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) Secretary Ben Brancel. “Because 84% of the state’s farmers responded, one of the highest rates in the country, Wisconsin will now have valuable information available to assist agricultural communities, businesses and policy makers make decisions impacting the industry.”

The U.S. Department of Agriculture National Statistics Service conducts the Census of Agriculture once every five years. It is a complete count of U.S. farms and operators. Data is collected on land use, ownership, operator characteristics, production practices, income and expenditures. Census questionnaires were mailed to farmers originally in December 2012.

According to the preliminary 2012 Census figures, Wisconsin is home to 69,756 farms on 14.57 million acres. Wisconsin ranks tenth in the nation in the number of farms.

The largest increase in number of farms by size group was farms with more than 1,000 acres. Farms with more than 1,000 acres increased by 15% in the 2012 Census. The average farm size in Wisconsin is 209 acres.

A farm is defined as any place from which \$1,000 of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the Census year.

In Wisconsin, half of the farm operators listed farming as the primary occupation. The 2012 Census of Agriculture revealed that the average age of the principal operator is 56. The number of principal operators of Spanish, Hispanic or Latino origin and Asian origin increased from 2007 to 2012. The preliminary numbers, however, did not report how many young people are engaged in farming operations either as partners or as family members. Those numbers will be included in the final census report due in May and will provide a better picture of the future of farming in Wisconsin.

Those final Census results will also include livestock inventory, crop acreage and production, energy, land use practices and production expenses.

“When the full Census is released in May, information on county level data will be included, better allowing us to understand the Wisconsin agricultural statistics,” concluded Greg Bussler, the State Statistician. “These numbers give us a snapshot of what is occurring in the nation’s agricultural industry, even during difficult drought conditions like 2012.”

Wisconsin farmers can access assistance throughout the year from DATCP’s Wisconsin Farm Center by calling the toll-free line at 1-800-942-2474 or emailing farmcenter@wisconsin.gov. The Farm Center staff offer transition services, financial counseling, business planning, herd-based diagnostic services and mediation support.

For more information on the Census of Agriculture, visit agcensus.usda.gov.

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